

A report of the
Department of Social Services
Commonwealth of Virginia

Annual Report on Child Care Automation

to the Governor and the
General Assembly of Virginia

October 2007



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Office of the Commissioner

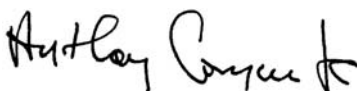
Anthony Conyers, Jr.
COMMISSIONER

October 15, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Timothy M. Kaine
Governor of Virginia

The General Assembly of Virginia

FROM: Anthony Conyers, Jr. 

SUBJECT: Annual Report on Child Care Automation

Study Mandate

This status report is submitted pursuant to item 334 J of the 2007 Appropriations Act, which establishes the intent of the General Assembly to automate the child care program. Item 334 J requires that:

“The Virginia Department of Social Services shall report to the Governor and the General Assembly by October 15 of each year regarding the status of such automation, system adequacy, and needed actions.”

Background

The child care program has grown significantly over the past decade. Expenditures have increased from approximately \$9 million in state fiscal year (SFY) 1989 to over \$160 million in SFY 2007. In SFY 2007, child care assistance was provided to over 56,000 children. The child care program is one of the largest assistance programs administered by the Department of Social Services (department). Steps have been taken toward a comprehensive automated system to support the program. Without full automation, providing timely program data in an efficient manner is difficult.

Automation to support the child care program has been limited. Case and client information is contained in the Virginia Client Information System (VACIS), a system developed in the early 1980s. The department is reviewing the VACIS system to determine how to migrate the remaining programs and users to newer technology. The present Interim Day Care System is a MAPPER-based application that tracks expenditures and counts of children and families served. The MAPPER system is being analyzed for the purpose of moving the functionality toward newer technology while meeting the needs of the users.

The Child Care Project, the department's child care automation project, continues to make progress in satisfying child care user requirements. Item 334 T of the 2007 Appropriations Act made available \$750,000 during fiscal year 2008 to create an automated child care management and payment system. In the first year, the project will focus on developing user requirements, changing subsidy policy to compliment new business practices, implementing a child care case management system through an existing Department system, and complying with VITA standards. In preparation for implementing the Child Care Project as part of a department-wide consolidated system, the following actions have taken place:

- A consultant was hired to gather multiple user requirements and provide leadership in the development of a simplified sign-on across multiple systems. This effort assisted in the development of an in-house application for a single customer ID across multiple systems as a component of the Child Care Project. This interface, Systems Partnering in a Demographic Repository (SPIDeR), allows the 120 local departments of social services, department staff and more than 15 Community Action Programs to view all cases that a client has within the department. The interface reduces the number of sign-ons that workers must use to access various applications and it reduces data entry, improves data quality and increases productivity. SPIDeR allows viewing of the composite records and moves the agency closer toward the goal of having an integrated social services delivery system.
- The Department has made progress in the conceptual exploration of a generic repository for fiscal information as a component of the Child Care Project.
- Data currently held in the Division of Licensing Programs automated system is now available on the public and local agency web site and will be incorporated into the Child Care Project.
- The waiting list for child care has been automated and implemented in local departments of social service. At any given time, the department and the local departments are able to see the numbers of families and children awaiting subsidy.
- A monthly report has been developed which provides financial data to the local departments of social services to assist them in the management of child care funds for their locality. This report is fiscal year driven and provides an accounting of the funds expended and projected surpluses or deficits for each budget line.
- The research and documentation necessary to incorporate interfaces of all the state social services systems is progressing in collaboration with the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA). VITA is providing system oversight, guidance and

assistance in locating vendors to meet the system communication mandate as well as providing a standard for state procurement.

- Research and evaluation of the Child Care Project automation is included within the department's Information Technology Strategic Plan. The Child Care Project is one of two major initiatives that have been promoted to VITA. The department will pursue automation through its partnership with VITA.
- Efforts are underway to look at the department's business needs as a whole and the consolidation and integration of similar business processes which will lead to streamlined automation efforts. Workgroups have been established and are meeting to lead this effort along with local agency partners.

Current Developments

The department has moved forward in the Child Care Project by designating a project manager to lead case management and payment system development. A committee consisting of state and local staff and child care providers has been formed to identify policies that need to be revised or streamlined to support future automation requirements. An Interface Systems Repository (ISR) to house child care provider data and track financial information is under development. A timeline projecting completion of essential activities has been prepared, which includes a kickoff meeting, gap analysis, cost benefit analysis, streamlining child care policy and final review of baseline requirements with an anticipated sign-off date of July 2008. Standing weekly meetings between child care and information technology staffs have been scheduled.

Summary

A fully automated child care system will improve state program management, allowing analysis of encumbrances and expenditures, assessment of unmet child care needs, and provide timely information regarding children and families served, providers utilized, and costs associated with child care. Item 334 T. provides funding to create a child care management and payment system. The department continues to work closely with VITA and state and local partners to promote the Child Care Project and ensure that automation efforts are a part of the department's integrated system.